CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.600
1 August 1991

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SIX HUNDREDTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 1 August 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Stephen J. Ledogar (United States of America)

GE.91-62125/3497B

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 600th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset I wish to convey to the representative of Switzerland, on behalf of the Conference on Disarmament and myself as President, our warmest congratulations on the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation. I hardly need stress the important role that Switzerland has played and continues to play in international affairs. Its reputation as the centre for sensitive negotiations on major issues facing the international community is well known, not only to us diplomats but to international public opinion at large. This important role has been further strengthened by a tradition which has rendered great contributions in the field of international humanitarian law and by the involvement of Swiss institutions in relief work for those suffering in regions devastated by the ravages of war and natural catastrophes. It is certainly not by chance that Switzerland is the host to a number of organizations in the United Nations system, and also to this Conference, to which it has been contributing effectively. May I ask the representative of Switzerland to transmit to his Government our best wishes on this historic commemorative day?

I should now like to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the Conference to the new representative of Indonesia, Soemadi Brotodiningrat, who is attending this plenary meeting. In doing so, I wish to pledge to him the continuing cooperation of my delegation with his own in the activities of the Conference. I am sure that we shall have in him a colleague who will carry on the good work done by his predecessor.

I also note today the presence of the participants in the 1991 United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme, who will be following our work as part of their activities. We all wish them success in their endeavours.

I have on my list of speakers today the representatives of France and Pakistan. At the end of that list I shall also make a short statement as representative of the United States of America, as will the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Ambassador Errera.

Mr. ERRERA (France) (translated from French): First of all, Mr. President, I should like to address to you my warmest congratulations on taking up the office of President of our Conference. We can all gauge the authority, the high ideals and the effectiveness with which you have been conducting our work. I am also pleased to be speaking following the signing between the United States and the Soviet Union of a disarmament agreement which my Government, like many others, has hailed as a historic event, and on which my delegation will have occasion to make its views known in the near future. I also wish to address my heartiest congratulations to the representative of Switzerland upon the national holiday of his country, which this year marks the 700th anniversary of the Confederation. Lastly, I also wish to greet and extend a welcome to our new colleague from Indonesia.

(Mr. Errera, France)

I have asked for the floor today in order to introduce a working paper (distributed under number CD/1092) relating to the prevention of an arms race in space. In its recent arms control and disarmament plan which I had occasion to present here on 6 June last, France proposed the development of a regime of confidence-building measures in space, in particular in the form of a "code of conduct in space" applicable to civilian and military satellites. The subject of course is not a new one. It has already been discussed within the Conference, and in particular in its Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, where numerous proposals have been put forward since 1985, in particular by the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada, Australia, Poland, the Soviet Union and Argentina. This work demonstrated that this subject was the focus of growing interest and support. Each of us is aware of the difficulties involved in a total prohibition of the deployment of arms in space. How does one define these arms, for example, and above all how does one verify such a prohibition?

On the other hand, by means of confidence-building measures - the development of registration and rules of behaviour - the purpose is to enhance the security of space activities by preventing any aggressive use of space. Experience acquired on Earth does indeed demonstrate that the implementation of confidence-building and security-building measures can constitute a fundamental stage leading subsequently to disarmament. This action, in our view, would not only be in keeping with the interests of all space Powers, but would contribute to ensuring international stability and help to permit development in space cooperation for civilian and scientific purposes, in the interests of all States, in conformity with the spirit of the 1967 outer space Treaty. That is why, among all the topics under discussion in the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, France is convinced that it is confidence-building measures which offer the best prospects for the near future.

France also proposed, in its disarmament plan of 3 June, the creation of regional agencies responsible for transparency, which would benefit from access to satellite images in the context of regional agreements on confidence and security. The usefulness of data derived from space observation in the monitoring of disarmament agreements or crisis management needs no further demonstration. Moreover, the international community increasingly recognizes the need for a regional approach to security and disarmament. France is therefore ready, for its part, to make a contribution to the establishment of such agencies, in particular through the training of specialists in photo-interpretation, the definition of reception facilities which could be made available to such agencies, and cooperation with other producers of space images to supply the agencies with the data needed for their operations.

The working paper submitted by my delegation provides further details of these various proposals. It will also be the subject of a more elaborate presentation by an expert from the National Centre for Space Studies, Mr. Pierre-Henri Pisani, at the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space on 6 August next. I hope that this contribution will make it possible for the Committee to move forward in its work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Kamal.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan): In my statement today I propose to address some aspects of the future chemical weapons convention, an important subject to which the Conference on Disarmament continues to devote by far the greatest amount of its time.

Allow me to reiterate, at the very outset, our perception of what the chemical weapons convention should encompass. We support a comprehensive, effective and equitable treaty which prohibits the development, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer and use of chemical weapons, and which provides for the total destruction of existing stockpiles, production facilities and delivery systems of chemical weapons. A convention which contains anything less than these fundamental provisions would not enjoy universal support, and this would undermine the basic concept of a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons. Let me also state once again for the record that Pakistan neither possesses chemical weapons nor desires to acquire them, and that it will continue to actively and positively contribute towards the early conclusion of a chemical weapons convention.

The impetus that has been provided to our negotiations by the recent change in the United States position is timely, and we welcome it. In fact, it has made it possible for us to refine article I, which for the first time now clearly spells out the prohibition of use in a straight-forward manner. If we continue our work in the same spirit in the coming months, and show due regard for the views of all negotiating partners, there is no reason why a convention cannot be concluded by the end of 1992 as has already been resolved by us.

Confidence in compliance with the future chemical weapons convention lies at the heart of our negotiations. It would be too simplistic to build a vitally important disarmament convention only on the premise that States parties would adhere to it in good faith, and with the intention of abiding by its provisions. Provisions relating to verification and compliance will consequently have to establish a system which ensures that treaty obligations are being strictly observed. While 100 per cent effective compliance machinery does not appear within the realm of the possible, our endeavour is to create an equitable and efficacious verification system which maximizes confidence in the treaty provisions. It is obvious that the type and intrusiveness of verification to which an activity would be subjected should be determined by the element of risk which that particular activity poses for the convention.

The verification regime which we have been developing for the convention consists of two main elements, namely routine inspection under article VI and challenge inspection under article IX. I shall address these articles separately.

(Mr. Kamal, Pakistan)

The importance of verification under article VI is undeniable. Unlike the provisions in the convention concerning destruction, which will apply only to chemical-weapon States, and which will hopefully become obsolete after the 10-year destruction period during which stocks and production facilities would be eliminated, the monitoring regime for activities not prohibited under the convention will be of unlimited duration and of direct interest to a considerably larger number of States. In this context we have addressed the question of clandestine production in facilities which are normally devoted to peaceful purposes but which could be converted to the production of chemicals posing a risk to the objectives of the convention. In developing a regime to address these concerns we must ensure that it is as non-intrusive as possible, while at the same time being as cost-effective as possible. We are not in favour of a system which places unnecessary hindrances on the civilian chemical industry, and in which certain elements of the challenge inspection procedure are sought to be injected. Continued insistence on the inclusion of such concepts are liable to result in the unnecessary politicization of an activity which is intrinsically routine in nature.

The provisions of article IX on challenge inspection will have a central place in the proposed convention, both as a means of providing confidence in its implementation and in order to deter potential violations. To be effective these procedures will have to be expeditious, non-discriminatory and mandatory. Although these principles now seem to be generally accepted, the task of translating them into agreed procedures has not been easy. Numerous proposals have been put forward, but success has eluded us so far. The working paper introduced by four delegations recently is a brave and positive attempt to break the deadlock on this issue, and we have noted that in its effort to accommodate many of the concerns that have been expressed in the Ad hoc Committee by various delegations, it has departed from some concepts which until now had been considered as sacrosanct and non-negotiable.

On this subject of challenge inspection, I would like to state once again some of the ideas which my delegation has expressed in the past, and continues to favour. Critically important among these is the imperative need for including clear conditions which prevent abuse of challenge inspection procedures, and which ensure the legitimate right of States, and particularly smaller States, to protect and safeguard sensitive information and installations which are not relevant to the convention. Additionally, once a challenge inspection is launched, it becomes a subject of concern to the States parties, and can no longer be treated as a bilateral affair between the challenging State and the challenged State: the primary responsibility of carrying out the inspection is that of the technical secretariat. The role of the observer still needs to be clearly defined, taking care not to make him into an "inspector of inspectors". And finally, irrespective of the subjective assessments of the parties concerned, once an inspection is completed, a clear determination on compliance or otherwise should be arrived at by the executive council. Failure to include such a provision in the convention would perpetuate a climate of distrust, and undermine confidence in the verification procedures.

(Mr. Kamal, Pakistan)

Articles X and XI of the convention are of special importance for the developing countries. My delegation has taken a particular interest in the development of the provisions for these articles, and we are happy to see that agreement has finally been reached in the Ad Hoc Committee to enhance their status by placing them in appendix I. This is indeed an important and overdue breakthrough, though some additional work is required yet to further refine their provisions. The viability and universality of the convention will depend, to a great extent, on the final shape these articles acquire before negotiations are concluded.

Even though the text of article X is fairly well developed, our perception of what it should encompass bears repetition. Firstly, an article which does not assure mandatory assistance and protection against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons will lead to an unbalanced convention. Secondly, the system that is established under this article for the provision of assistance should have an automaticity and predictability about it, of the type of automaticity and predictability that is being sought for the verification mechanisms, for the two directly complement each other. Thirdly and finally, a system of assistance and protection will have no meaning without the actual availability of adequate resources with the Director General, which enable him to provide assistance and protection in case of need, and most particularly in cases requiring emergency assistance.

The language of article XI was developed some years ago and will have to be refined to reflect existing realities. In our view, the provisions of this article should incorporate the obligation of States parties not to impede international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemical science and technology, and an undertaking that existing discriminatory mechanisms will be dismantled once the convention comes into force. As in the case of the suggestion that has been repeatedly heard in this forum, calling on all States to declare their intention to adhere to a future convention even while its text is still under negotiation, perhaps member States who, individually or collectively, apply export controls and restrictions on the transfer of certain chemicals may consider declaring their intention to dismantle these measures for the States who signed the future chemical weapons convention. Simultaneously, as suggested by Austria and supported by other States, member States who have entered reservations to the Geneva Protocol might also consider announcing their intention to withdraw their reservations once the convention comes into force. Such gestures would promote confidence in the convention, and contribute to the objective of its universality, to which we are all committed.

The composition, powers and functions of the executive council are outstanding and thorny issues, and we hope that they will be addressed in an appropriate setting during the current session of the Ad Hoc Committee. Our past discussions have helped us to identify most of the issues and options already. What is now required is the will to strike a compromise which should be realistic and equitable.

(Mr. Kamal, Pakistan)

We share the view expressed by a majority of delegations that the executive council should consist of between about 25 and 30 members. At the same time we also believe that the convention should contain provision for the expansion of the executive council in the future, if the situation so warrants.

While choosing a system for the allocation of seats, a balance has to be struck between the undeniable interests of those States which have substantial chemical industries many of which will either be directly concerned by the convention or whose cooperation will be essential, the equally undeniable interests of those States which are situated in particularly sensitive regions or who have specific threat perceptions, and the overall and overriding need for a democratic and regionally representative membership. However, some flexibility will be necessary so that no one of these three legitimacies overwhelms the other two, and so that the membership of this vital organ does not take on a colour that prejudges its decisions. We think a formula can be found, provided there is general agreement on the need for compromise and adjustment between these three types of interest.

We are now in a stage of intense and intensified work, when many factors lead us to believe that meaningful results can be achieved in negotiating and drafting a convention which will be comprehensive and fair, and which will then draw the type of universal adherence which we all seek. Let none of us be found wanting in far-sighted statesmanship now when the glimmer of success is in sight, and when we all see the positive and early possibility of outlawing an entire type of abhorrent weapon from our global community.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement. As I now have no other previously inscribed speakers on my list, I shall now proceed with my own statement. I see now and recognize the representative of Germany, Ambassador von Wagner.

Mr. von WAGNER (Germany): Mr. President, forgive me for asking for the floor without being inscribed on your list. I take the floor to announce the following.

The German delegation has pleasure in informing you about a technical presentation on "Lessons learnt from GSETT-2: A proposal for an open seismic stations concept" by the German representatives to the GSE, Prof. Dr. Harjes and Mr. Henger. In this presentation, an alternative to the currently used concept of national and international data centres for the verification of a future NTB will be suggested. The open seismic station concept would result in significant advantages, such as immediate and unhindered access to seismic wave-form data by all participants at any time; retrieval of data on a need-to-know basis, thus reducing the requirements for communications; and, finally, costs for data transmission will be lowered considerably.

The presentation will take place at 3 p.m. on 7 August 1991 in room XVI on the fifth floor of the Palais des Nations, and it will be followed by a reception in the Delegates' Restaurant on the eighth floor of the same Palais. The German delegation would be highly honoured if delegations could find time to attend the presentation and to take part in the reception in the Delegates' Restaurant.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement, and we will take due note of the information he has kindly provided.

I would now proceed with the brief statements by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

As was already noted by the representative of France, yesterday a historic agreement, the Treaty on strategic arms reductions or the START Treaty, was signed in Moscow by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev. That signing ceremony culminated nine years of hard work here in Geneva, and represented a major achievement in securing a more stable, predictable balance at lower levels of strategic nuclear forces.

Once ratified, the START Treaty will reduce, over seven years, each side's strategic nuclear weapons from their current levels of between 10,000 and 11,000 weapons to between 8,000 and 9,000 weapons. The agreement includes a major reduction in the most destabilizing and dangerous weapons - namely, land-based ballistic missiles and their warheads - and it places restrictions on specific types of strategic weapons. The Treaty embodies the concepts of equality, stability, predictability, deep reductions, and transparency.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this Treaty is its contribution to increasing predictability and transparency. A protocol containing over 80 different types of notifications will help both sides understand the strategic military activities of the other side. Twelve different forms of inspections and the permanent monitoring of certain ballistic missile production in each country will provide firm assurances that Treaty obligations are being met. The Treaty will have a duration of 15 years, unless superseded beforehand by a subsequent agreement.

At a future date, we would plan to introduce the basic text of the START Treaty into this body as a CD document.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Ambassador Batsanov.

Mr. BATSANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translated from Russian): First of all, I should now like to convey greetings to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador von Arx, and the members of his delegation, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation. This is an important landmark in the history of a country which is playing a very positive role in the European and world processes. We value not only the traditional Swiss hospitality, which ensures excellent conditions in particular for the work of a whole range of the most important international organizations, including the Conference on Disarmament, but also the specific constructive contribution made by the Swiss Government to the settlement of problems facing the world community. On behalf of the Soviet delegation and personally, I should like on this day to wish our Swiss colleagues every success, health and happiness, and I would request them to transmit our sincere congratulations and best wishes to the Swiss Government.

(Mr. Batsanov, USSR)

I would also wish to offer greetings to our distinguished President, Ambassador Ledogar, who is conducting the proceedings of the Conference in a highly worthy manner, and also to express confidence that during his tenure as President we will achieve concrete results in the solution of tasks facing the Conference.

Today, as the representative of a State - one of the two States - participating in the bilateral Soviet-American negotiations, which culminated yesterday in the signing of the historic Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, I wish to say a few words in connection with that event, without repeating what has just been stated by Ambassador Ledogar. The Treaty signed by our Presidents is the result of many years of efforts, a great deal of work and patience, will-power and boldness, demanded of statesmen, diplomats and the military, as well as the overcoming of stereotyped ideas concerning each other which on occasion appeared to be tougher than gun-metal. The Treaty symbolizes the continuation of the voluntary reduction of the nuclear arsenals of the USSR and the United States of America, which is unprecedented in scale and purpose and offers unequivocal proof of the resolve of both sides to discharge their obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Together with the Treaty on the elimination of Soviet and American intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, it imparts to the dismantling of the infrastructure of nuclear confrontation which was built up during the years of the "cold war" a momentum which it will be difficult to halt. It is important that now there is growing understanding of the absurdity of an overarmed world, especially when mankind has moved towards an era of economic interdependence. To be sure the Treaty is not ideal, and we cannot exclude the possibility that certain provisions contained in it will be criticized. Many, perhaps, may say that the reductions provided for are not sufficient. However, we are convinced that the parties have done everything that is possible at this stage and at the same time necessary for further movement forward. It is important that we have built a basis for further stabilizing reductions in strategic offensive armaments, and the resolve of the parties to move forward in this direction has been placed on record, inter alia in the Soviet-American statement of 1 June 1990.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I would now ask whether any other representative wishes to address the plenary today. I see that the representative of Switzerland wishes to take the floor. You have the floor, Ambassador von Arx.

Mr. von ARX (Switzerland) (translated from French): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor in this plenary, Mr. President, I wish to extend my warm congratulations to you on your task that is so full of responsibilities and dignity. The delegation of Switzerland is convinced that under your guidance, and that of your predecessors, we will make significant steps towards our common goal, and we are indebted to you and all those who preceded you for all your endeavours. I would like to assure you of the constructive cooperation of the delegation of Switzerland. On this occasion also I wish to welcome our new colleague from Indonesia.

(Mr. von ARX, Switzerland)

You, Mr. President, as well as the representatives of France and the Soviet Union, were kind enough this morning, on our national day, to convey dignified and friendly words of congratulation to my delegation and my country on the occasion of its 700th anniversary. We are very grateful to you and I must say how moved we were at your words. I shall without fail convey this to my authorities. Seven hundred years of existence of a small State in the midst of Europe which is often so turbulent - are there any lessons to be drawn from this, any experience to be gained that might perhaps be helpful to us too in our work which is so important here in the Conference on Disarmament?

Perhaps one first point. Our Confoederatio Helvetica did not drop out of the sky, and it is never quite complete. It was created 700 years ago by the firm political will of three small mountain States in the centre of our country, and that political will to expand that State, even by entities with different cultures, different languages or religions, was necessary throughout the 700 years and will be necessary too in the future. Let us recall the fact that the most recent canton in our country, the canton of Jura, was established not quite 20 years ago, when the canton of Jura separated from the canton of Berne in keeping with the wishes of its population and acceptance by the people of Berne and all of Switzerland. Our country is and remains based on that political will which must be elaborated on, maintained, developed, day by day, year by year. What ideas can we draw from this to assist us in our work? That we too must continue our political work day after day without giving up courage and confidence, and that, even if we have attained intermediate goals, however extraordinarily important, our work will not be finished.

A further point. Only roughly 150 years ago, my country was one of the poorest countries in Europe. Karl Marx, when he made an extended trip to Switzerland, ended by drawing conclusions concerning what he had seen and studied. His verdict was that, given the geographical circumstances - just rocks, a few pastures and a few cows, and the absence of raw materials - Switzerland would forever remain a poor State. If you compare that with the development of my country since then, we can perhaps draw two conclusions. First of all, that even great minds can make mistakes, and secondly that even things that appear to be impossible can be realized. That too can guide us in our work and give us courage.

With these few thoughts I would like to conclude, thanking you all once again for your warm congratulations. The Swiss delegation is pleased to invite you all this evening to our 700th anniversary at the Domaine de Penthes.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Switzerland, and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair, and we look forward to his hospitality this evening. I see that the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Brotodiningrat, wishes to take the floor.

Mr. BROTODININGRAT (Indonesia): May I first congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament? I would also like to felicitate the delegation of Switzerland, which today celebrates the 700th anniversary of its beautiful country.

(Mr. Brotodiningrat, Indonesia)

May I take the opportunity just to express my most sincere thanks and appreciation for your kind words of welcome you have just addressed to me? Being just a beginner, it would be pretentious for me to promise you a substantial contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, but it would certainly be most appropriate for my delegation to pledge to you its full cooperation in the discharge of your demanding task. Let me at this point just reiterate the utmost importance that my Government attaches to disarmament in general and to the work of the CD in particular. Once again, Mr. President, thank you very much for the welcome.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Sir, and I hope that your tour here will be long enough that you can make it around to this seat before you leave.

May I now turn to other business? First of all, the secretariat has circulated today the timetable of meetings of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies to be held next week. As usual, the timetable is only indicative and may be changed if necessary. On this understanding, I suggest that we adopt it.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Next, I would like to recall that, in the context of the work of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts, there will be a number of activities. I have asked the secretariat to circulate the text of a communication addressed to me by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group, Dr. Ola Dahlman, concerning a technical demonstration of Inmarsat's satellite transmission capability. That letter will also be circulated this afternoon in the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, for its information. The technical demonstration will be held on 8 August at 3 p.m. in the Salon de Genève, Delegates' Restaurant, on the eighth floor. We were also informed by the representative of Canada, at our last plenary meeting, that on Monday 5 August, Dr. Kin Yip Chun will present a layman's briefing on certain aspects of his work, which will focus on further developments of seismic monitoring methodologies. That briefing will take place in room VII at 3 p.m. As announced today by the representative of Germany, his delegation is inviting all members and non-members to a technical demonstration of an "open seismic CD station", to take place on Wednesday 7 August, at 3 p.m. in room XVI.

I have no other business for today. Before I adjourn, I should like to recall that, immediately following this plenary meeting, the Conference will hold its last informal meeting on the substance of agenda item 2. As announced on several occasions, with that meeting the Conference shall conclude its series of informal meetings on agenda items 2 and 3. Of course, in accordance with the rules of procedure, members wishing to do so may continue to address these agenda items at plenary meetings of the Conference.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held one week from today, on Thursday 8 August, at 10. a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.